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ABSTRACT

An introduction to the evaluation of the effects of Michigan migrant education projects on migrant children enrolled in its schools during the summer or 1971 is presented in this document. Background information concerning the general migrant phenomenon, the agencies and institutions responsible for providing migrant children with educational services, the structural arrangements existing between these agencies, and the general procedures and important characteristics involved in or illustrative of the services is provided. Discussed in the document are the contours of migrant education in Michigan, the structure of migrant education agencies in other states and the interrelation of those agencies with the education of migrant children in Michigan, and the general evaluation plan. Related documents are RC 006 241 and RC 006 242. (MJB)

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EVALUATION OF MICHIGAN MIGRANT EDUCATION
SUMMER 1971 PROGRAMS

Michigan Migrant Education Center
Central Michigan University
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
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INTRODUCTION

The work presented here is an evaluation of the effects of Michigan migrant education projects on migrant children enrolled in its schools during the summer of 1971. The focus of the research was the general educational gains made by these children utilizing behavioral or performance criteria. This evaluation was undertaken by the staff of the Migrant Education Center at Central Michigan University as part of its general responsibilities to the Migrant Division of the State Department of Education's Compensatory Education Program.

Two separate evaluations were invclved. First, a state wide sample of classrooms from over 50 percent of the summer migrant schools was selected and tested with respect to gains made in reading achievement, self-concept and school sentiment among pupils as a result of exposure to these schools and their instruction. Secondly, utilizing a smaller sample of classrooms, a more in-depth evaluation of oral language instruction and classroom verbal interaction was undertaken utilizing on the scene testing and observation. The purpose was to evaluate gains in oral language production and conceptualization (in English) in relation to teacher, aide, and student verbal interaction and the general teaching strategies used in these classrooms.

Before embarking on a description of the evaluation and its results, it would be useful to provide a background concerning the general migrant phenomenon, the agencies and institutions concerned with providing migrant children with educational services, the structural arrangements

existing between these agencies, and the general procedures and important characteristics involved in or illustrative of the services given. With this background, the reader may be better able to place the actual evaluation results in appropriate context and realize the specific importance and utility of the findings and conclusions.

Contours of Migrant Education in Michigan

While the phenomenon of unskilled agricultural laborers leaving their homes in search of agricultural employment is not a new nor a localized phenomenon, this aspect of the American socio-economic scene has tended to show considerable variation over time and space with respect to a number of characteristics important to the planning, structure, and provision of educational services to the children of these workers.

The migrant agricultural workers in the United States derive from essentially three general segments of the American population; blacks, principally from the southeastern states; rural whites from the mid-atlantic and south central states; and the Spanish-speaking (mainly Mexican and Mexican-American) from the southwestern states and California. Secondly, the principal factors behind their migration, generally, appears to be a declining number of opportunities for employment in agricultural and other unskilled labor in their home states due to increasing mechanization and professionalization (technical) of agricultural and other extractive industries.

While the forces behind their movement may be the same the patterns of migration show considerable differences. Thus, the need for agricultural labor in eastern states is provided primarily by blacks, while that of the midwest and plains states is provided predominantly by Mexicans or Mexican-Americans. Blacks are the second largest group of migrant

agricultural laborers in Michigan and whites compose an even smaller proportion. Although no exact figures are available, the best estimates are that Mexican-Americans consititute approximately 70 percent of the migrant population, blacks approximately 20 percent and whites somewhat under 10 percent. Despite this breakdown, the percentage of Mexican-American migrant children in need of educational services in Michigan is predominately much higher, due to the fact that black migrants coming to Michigan tend to come in groups of single men, whereas the Mexican-Americans more typically arrive in family groups. A review of 22 summer project proposals shows that, of the anticipated migrant school children for 1971, 87 percent are Mexican-American. Only 3 percent of the children expected are black and 9 percent white. These projected figures were confirmed by the sample drawn for the intensive part of the evaluation wherein Mexican-Americans comprised 90 percent of the sample drawn from summer project classrooms across the state.

The particular familial nature of Mexican-American migration to Michigan gives rise to still another important distinguishing characteristic of migrant education services. It is obvious that the family group thinks of itself and functions as one unified production unit. In other words, bringing all or most of the members of the family, to work together, enhances or maximizes the earning power of the migrant head of household. Thus, only those children too young or inexperienced to work in the fields are seen as being more appropriately placed in summer migrant schools, if for no other reason than to be taken care of while the parents and older siblings are out earning the family's livelihood. The majority of migrant children to be received in Michigan migrant education projects or schools are children of pre-school, kindergarten and early elementary school age. Once again referring to the "projections" in the summer

project proposals mentioned above, out of an anticipated 6,087 migrant children, 2,281 (37.4 percent) were estimated to be pre-school age children, 1,102 (18.1 percent) kindergarten age, 2,662 (43.85 percent) elementary school age children, and less than 1 percent (42) secondary school age children.

In reference to the migrant labor phenomenon, several features crucial to the problem of providing these children with educational services should be mentioned. First, it should be pointed out that many of the overall economic forces which "displaced" the unskilled agricultural laborer in the south and southwest have begun to make themselves felt in the midwest. The mechanization and general industrialization of agriculture is steadily decreasing the need for migrant labor in Michigan. Indeed, the peak periods of migrant labor need have apparently passed and we are witnessing a decline in overall need for such a labor force. This has resulted in two important conditions. First, it has increased and accelerated the settling out process in Michigan (primarily in urban areas) and into on-going community schools that have few facilities for coping with or meeting the special needs of these children who, furthermore, generally fall outside the stated priorities of the state's Title I (migrant) programs. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, those still in the migrant stream in Michigan during the peak periods of agricultural activity are forced to move about the state with greater frequency than in the past. Thus, eligible children are forced to change migrant project schools several times during the summer before returning to their home state. Briefly consider the problems created by this last situation for purposes of planning for and providing effective education in comparison with Texas and California, the two largest recipients of federal Title I

(migrant) funds. While the state migrant programs of the state of Texas (where migrant programs have a stable population of children for approximately six months) or California (where the vast majority of the migrants are intrastate and are therefore placed in regional programs which can be effectively organized on a long range basis), Michigan cannot easily anticipate, coordinate or effect educational programs. This problem was especially evident in attempting to select a representative sample of classrooms for the evaluation and effectively prohibited a useful pre-post test design, as will be seen further on. More importantly, the problems created or at least aggravated by this situation are to be seen in the lack of uniformity from program to program, area to area, within Michigan with regard to the types of objectives, their degree of specificity, and the concomitant activities necessary to realize these goals or objectives. In the summer proposals reviewed, a unanimous objective of these project proposals had to do with language arts and communication skills in English. With respect to other objectives, the proposals varied greatly. For example, only a little more than half gave math and science objectives; less than half of the proposals mentioned self-concept related goals; a little over three-fourths mentioned cultural heritage and somewhat over half had health related goals. Further, the objectives were state--perhaps of necessity--in such general terms that little can be deduced with respect to the terminal behavior anticipated or desired.

This summary of some of the major dimensions of Michigan's migrant situation should serve to point out some of the major contours of the migrant education program and some of the specific factors behind the particular characteristics of the evaluation undertaken. We are, then, dealing with a program where the principal target population is Mexican-

American--whose principal characteristic is being a bi-cultural and bilingual population. Such a population would be expected to have educational problems revolving principally around linguistic and communications skills. Secondly, it is a program aimed primarily at the youngest age-grade levels partly as a result of the population's "familistic" adaptation to the labor needs of agricultural production in Michigan.

Finally, it is a program that has had to contend with a target population with a high degree of spatial and temporal intrastate mobility--a factor that, in part, is responsible for a "minimal" amount of state level coordination and consistency in its objectives and instructional activities.

Migrant Education Agencies: Their Structure, Interrelation, and the Education of Migrant Children in Michigan

The structure of migrant education in Michigan involves, principally, three major agencies: 1) the Migrant Division of Compensatory Education of the State Department of Education (hereafter referred to as "Division"); 2) local migrant education agencies, which are usually dependencies of either local or intermediate school districts (hereafter referred to as LEA); and 3) the Migrant Education Center at Central Michigan University (hereafter referred to as "Center").

The Division has the responsibility of encouraging the drafting of proposals for the establishment of migrant education projects by LEA's, particularly in areas of known migrant population concentration. Once elaborated, the Division reviews, modifies, and ultimately approves these proposals and their respective budgets. The Title I monies for each project are subsequently allocated directly to the LEA and are administered by the project director. In addition to soliciting and helping LEA's

submit proposals, the Division provides the guidelines for the structure, procedures and educational/instructional objectives to be followed by the LEA's in carrying out the projects.

The principal vehicle used by the Division in carrying out the above functions is a directors' conference, usually held sometime in March, to which previous directors, or new, potential directors are invited. It is at this conference that much of the necessary information concerning proposal writing, guidelines, educational priorities and available supportive services (medical, nutritional, recreational, etc.) is given to directors. It should be mentioned that one area of extreme importance to the conduct of projects which was given little attention at the conference this past year was the elaboration of specific behavioral objectives. The directors then return to their local or intermediate school districts and proceed to elaborate the proposal and to plan the project's work for the summer.

The other major function of the Division is to provide teacher and paraprofessional training for the personnel of the projects if funds. This training takes the form of a two or three day workshop, held in strategic locations throughout the state. Generally speaking, these workshops consist of capsule courses or demonstrations for imparting teaching skills to teachers and paraprofessionals (aides) in such substantive areas as reading, oral language, math and science, and crafts. In addition, demonstrations on such non-directed skills as decision making and teacher sensitivity to the "cultural attributes of pupils" are offered, as well as tangential skills such as the appropriate use of the migrant record transfer system.

While the local project director, under the Title I guidelines, is at liberty to provide some form of training workshop for his teachers and

aides, it is considered obligatory that all projects avail their personnel to the Division sponsored training workshops. These workshops are usually immediately prior to the start of the project schools. As in the case of the directors' conference, these training workshops did not have any instruction or demonstrations concerning the elaboration of specific behavioral objectives in any of the substantive areas of instruction.

It will not be necessary here to attempt a summary of the actual instructional activities carried out by the LEA's during the summer. Much of this will become evident in discussing the evaluation and its results. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the LEA's' activities need to be mentioned. First of all, application must be made to the Division for summer project funds every year. Since Title I (migrant) unlike Title I (regular), is not an entitlement, the need for funds will vary depending on projected student population and may indeed be denied if the Division considers it unnecessary to have such a project in a particular area of the state. Secondly, the project and the LEA sponsoring it are solely responsible to the Division for the manner in which they dispose of their funds. The recruitment of personnel (teachers and aides),establishing the appropriate physical plant, the instructional activities to be carried out, the type and extent of supportive social and other services afforded the migrant children are the responsibility and prerogative of the LEA and the project director.

Another important responsibility of the LEA and project director is to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of their particular program in imparting the academic skills to which priority has been given. In the past, this responsibility has been carried out fitfully, at least, and generally the evaluations made have been almost entirely subjective or impressionistic. Very seldom has an evaluation been carried out in

terms of behavioral achievement criteria and never has there been a state wide comparative evaluation of the summer program in these terms.

The Migrant Education Center was established in January of 1971, through a Title I (migrant) grant to the School of Education of Central Michigan University. The expressed purposes of the Center were threefold: 1) to develop and improve migrant teacher and paraprofessional training programs; 2) to develop and improve curriculum and instructional resources for use in migrant education projects or schools; and 3) to carry out evaluations of the programs utilizing behavioral or performance criteria. While the Center primarily assisted the Division in carrying out its existing training and curriculum programs, its principal responsibility was to elaborate and carry out a state wide evaluation of the type mentioned above and the results of which compose the principal portions of this text.

Before proceeding to a description of the general evaluation plan and its components, it should be noted that while this responsibility was ordained by the Division, the Center had no authority or jurisdiction over LEA's or projects in this matter of evaluation. In other words, cooperation with the evaluation was not compulsory, but rather had to be requested of these projects through the good offices of the Division. Fortunately, such cooperation was forthcoming and, given the numerous problems and obligations of these projects, was generally good.

General Evaluation Plan: Summer, 1971

In fulfilling its obligations to the State Department of Education, the Center carried out a two-level evaluation.

The first level was a state wide evaluation of gains in achievement or ability in oral language and oral reading, as well as gains in self-concept and in positive attitudes toward the school. Dr. Charles Eiszler was in charge of this evaluation, assisted by Mr. Tom Dittman.

While the details of sampling, statistical analysis, the nature of the instruments used to measure gains, and still other technicalities are dealt with by Dr. Eiszler, two features of this evaluation deserve mention here. Firstly, carrying out this evaluation required the provision of training for the migrant teachers and aides whose responsibility it was to administer the tests called for at the appropriate times. This training took place during the three day pre-service teacher training workshops. An evaluation of the amount of understanding gained by these teachers concerning the nature of the instruments and the schedule of testing was done and the results were generally satisfactory. In addition, the procedures, timing, etc. involved were simplified and provided in a detailed instruction booklet distributed to the teachers selected for this state wide sample.

Secondly, it should be noted that although the vast majority of the children were Mexican-American, no claim is made here as to the "cultural" appropriateness of the instruments used. It is realized that this issue in testing and evaluation is of much concern among Mexican-American, black and other educators today. However, this issue is not of particular importance here since the objective of this evaluation was not to test native ability or placement, but rather change or gains over time or exposure to migrant education schools in Michigan during the summer of 1971.

The first level evaluation, then, is intended to be as comprehensive or extensive as possible. Although the principal objective of this level is measuring change in achievement, Dr. Eiszler relates certain general classroom characteristics to differentials in gain across the total sample.

The second level evaluation to the contrary, attempts to be a more intensive, in-depth analysis of observed teacher-student verbal interaction in the classroom and how this interaction (including student linguistic interference problems) shapes both teaching strategies and relative gains in oral language production and conceptualization. In part the rationale behind this phase of evaluation was to attempt to discover why learning does or does not take place in these classrooms.

The second level, intensive evaluation and analysis was based on a much smaller sample and was carried out directly by Center personnel in the field. Miss Eleanor DeLing was the principal researcher of this phase. Working under the direction of Miss DeLing were five graduate students: Messrs. Alfredo Benavidez, Rene Carbajal, Joel Cavazos, and J. J. Ramos, from Michigan State University; Mr. James MacLaury of the University of Michigan; and Mr. Paul Ruiz of Central Michigan University. These graduate students were trained by Miss DeLing in Verbal Interaction Analysis recording and in the administration of the Michigan Oral Language Productive Test as well as the Conceptual Oral Language Test. Once again, no claim is made here for the cultural appropriateness of these instruments. As in the case of the instruments used in the first level evaluation, the interest in <u>relative</u> gains only justifies the use of these instruments here.

Finally, it should be noted that the purpose of both levels of evaluation was not an evaluation of the teachers, aides or projects as such. Quite the contrary, the purpose was to evaluate the effects and nature of the over all program relative to the projects' own procedures, general objectives and particular characteristics.